

NLM Strategic Plan to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities 2000-2005

Focus on Dissemination of Information to Minority Communities

I. Statement of NLM Mission

The National Library of Medicine (NLM), in pursuit of its longstanding mission to acquire, organize, and disseminate health-related information, now has the opportunity to provide near-instantaneous reliable access to high quality health information resources and content when and where they are needed for research, education, and patient care. The support of NIH's efforts to understand and eliminate health disparities between minority and majority populations is an integral part of NLM's mission.

II. Goals

A. Research

- 1. Advance understanding of the development and progression of disease that contributes to health disparities**
 - a) genetics
 - b) environment/socioeconomic status
 - c) mechanisms of disease
 - d) epidemiology/risk factors
- 2. Develop new or improved approaches for detecting or diagnosing the onset or progression of disease and disability**
- 3. Develop new or improved approaches for preventing or delaying the onset or progression of disease and disability**
- 4. Develop new or improved approaches for treating disease and disability**
- 5. Other**

B. Research Infrastructure

Advances in communications and networking technologies help facilitate NLM's achievement of its mission. The rapid development of Internet and World Wide Web technologies make possible the quick, cost-effective distribution and exchange of biomedical information. Progress in

telemedicine offers the promise of the cost-effective practice of medicine at a distance. NLM has always been a leader in researching and applying new technologies—typically years ahead of their widespread adoption. Today, the Internet – and tomorrow its Next Generation – offer new opportunities for NLM to leverage its resources for strengthening the U.S. and global biomedical information infrastructure. This infrastructure includes not only advanced computing and communications technologies, but also people trained to develop, use, and assist others in deploying and using advanced information systems, institutions committed and structured to make effective use of these systems, and public policy that promotes rather than inhibits important health applications of information technology. Because NLM's goal is to spread the benefits of electronic health information resources to the widest possible audience, the Library's concerns are international as well, and address global health disparities as well as domestic.

1. Support research training and career development

- a) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: Training in Medical Informatics and Bioinformatics (*ongoing/expanded*)

Support and encourage minority institutions in medical and bio-informatics training, and broaden the spectrum of health professionals who receive this training (e.g. nurses, dentists, hospital administrators, public health professionals).

- b) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: Minority Recruitment (*ongoing/expanded*)

Working with the Medical Library Association (MLA), the American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA), public schools, and other appropriate organizations to recruit more people from minority groups into health sciences librarianship and informatics. Providing opportunities for practica at NLM for recipients of minority scholarships to library schools.

2. Provide support for institutional resources (extramural and intramural).

- a) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: International Partnerships (*new*) (*recommended for highlight in the Executive Summary*)

Develop a capability to work in carefully selected needful areas of the world where there are severe, recent health emergencies and with collaborative efforts with other organizations both domestic and

international, set up targeted, carefully defined efforts (such as NLM participation within the Multilateral Initiative on Malaria in Africa).

- b) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: Internet Connectivity in Sub-Saharan Africa (*ongoing/expanded*)

Expand and enhance efforts to improve Internet connectivity and communications in sub-Saharan Africa, including at malaria research sites in the following countries: Kenya, Mali, Ghana, Tanzania, and other locations.

- c) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: Telemedicine Links for Toxicology Information Outreach (*ongoing/expanded*)

Develop and strengthen telecommunications linkages among the member institutions of the Minority Health Professions Foundation. This offers an excellent opportunity to bring information resources to underserved populations in the U.S. and will allow the HBCUs participating in the Toxicology Information Outreach Project described above to build telemedicine links to each other as well as to external resources.

- d) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: Tribal Connectivity (*ongoing/expanded*)

Expand efforts to improve Internet connectivity and access to health information services in American Indian and Alaskan Native communities.

- e) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: Foster Partnerships between Medical Libraries and Community Organizations (*ongoing/expanded*)

Fund outreach projects to support NN/LM institutions that form partnerships with public libraries, health professional associations, public health departments, churches, and community-based organizations, especially those located in inner cities.

3. Other

C. Public Information/Outreach/Education

NLM is directing many of its efforts toward remedying the disparity in health opportunities experienced by important segments of the American population. These efforts are based on the belief that improving access to

affordable and easy-to-use health-related information (in the form of published literature, databases, and the authoritative content of others) can help solve health disparities. Collection and database development is critical to this. The advanced information products and services of the National Library of Medicine are built on the foundation stone of its unparalleled collections. The Library today is seen as a principal source of biomedical information and the NLM's many high-technology programs are infused with the confidence and competence resulting from a century and a half of experience in filling the information needs of health professionals. The Library continues to place primary emphasis on its role as acquirer, organizer, and disseminator of health-related information. Its new emphasis on providing access to health information that can be understood and used by the general public advances its efforts to reduce health disparities even more. This area of focus is the underpinning NLM's mission to improve health for all through better access to more understandable health information.

1. Develop research-based information resources

a) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: Organize Information for the Public (*ongoing/expanded*)

Organize selected authoritative electronic information written for the general public with an emphasis on science-based, nationally applicable information for minority populations. Conduct and support informatics research designed to produce health information systems that minority members of the public can use easily and understand. Develop a consumer health terminology server to provide assistance to the increasing members of the general public, including minorities, who are users of NLM's Web-based systems, including spelling correction algorithms and investigation of multi-language interfaces.

Conduct and support basic and applied research to identify health care professionals', researchers', and the general public's need for, access to, evaluation of, and use of biomedical and health information (including those in minority communities). Use NLM databases, e.g. the Clinical Trials database and MEDLINEplus, as test-beds for research on health information seeking behavior by the public, including racial and ethnic minorities. Broaden end user studies beyond measures of satisfaction to include the effects of information on health outcomes.

- b) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: Augment the Collection
(ongoing/expanded)

Augment the NLM collection (print and databases) in research areas that are associated with health disparities.

2. Communicate research-based information to increase public awareness and/or change personal health habits

NLM's new emphasis on directing its information products and services to the general public as well as to the health professions breaks with a century of tradition and practice and places the NLM at the center of the movement to provide health information via the Internet and the World Wide Web. This has major implications for its efforts to reduce health disparities through better information. The Library's user community has become much broader and it now provides a range of Web-based offerings that are geared for many audiences.

- a) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: Facilitate Use by Minority Members of the Public *(new) (recommended for highlight in the Executive Summary)*

Develop easy-to-use access and delivery mechanisms that promote the public's understanding of health information resources and are sensitive to cultural diversity issues, educational level, and language (e.g., Spanish).

- b) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: Informatics Support for Minority Diabetes Patients *(new) (recommended for highlight in the Executive Summary)*

Determine whether a diverse population of Type 1 diabetic minority children and adolescents, given access to electronic information resources, will be empowered to manage their diabetes and avoid costly and debilitating complications. Provide technical consultation for the use of smart-card technology to improve both diabetes care and adherence to preventive measures among Type 2 Diabetic Latino and African Americans living in low-income Los Angeles County health districts.

- c) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: Outreach to Native Americans
(*new*)

Build on the successful “tribal connections” Internet program in the Pacific Northwest for Native Americans to emphasize information about Type 2 diabetes and HIV/AIDS.

- d) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: Promote Use of HIV/AIDS Information Resources (*ongoing/expanded*)

Expand efforts to promote improved access to HIV/AIDS information to patients, the affected community and their care givers, as well as the general public. Implementation of this goal can include providing access to electronic resources, training in the use of these resources, expanding collections, Internet connections, development of locally specific information materials, and opening access to collections and document delivery services. A number of these awards target Hispanic populations.

- e) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: HIV/AIDS Coverage
(*ongoing/expanded*)

Expand coverage of HIV/AIDS information important for national and local communities through indexing and keyboarding of meeting abstracts and newsletters

- f) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: Spanish Language Enhancements to HIV/AIDS Databases (*ongoing/expanded*)

Update HIV/AIDS information resources with Spanish language enhancements, including translations of titles and summaries, development of training resources and supporting materials, translation of the glossary, and other related enhancements to make HIV/AIDS databases more useful to Hispanic communities.

It should be noted that NLM's AIDS budget includes \$3 million to support basic library services; much of this indirectly supports efforts to reduce health disparities through information dissemination.

g) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: Outreach to Hispanics
(ongoing/expanded)

Expand outreach to Hispanic populations. Improve efforts to inform the Hispanic community about NLM products and services. Provide access to more Spanish-language material.

h) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: District of Columbia Partners in Education Program (ongoing/expanded)

Provide training and opportunities for individual projects in use of medical informatics tools and resources to high school students and faculty.

3. Transfer knowledge to health care providers

Outreach to health professionals--particularly those health professionals who practice in rural and underserved areas and those who serve minority populations--continues to be one of NLM's highest priorities. Since 1989, outreach efforts have been directed toward creating awareness of, access to, and use of NLM's products and services by practicing health professionals. As part of an NLM-wide initiative, the Library is devoting considerable attention and resources to improving health professionals' access to information, with special emphasis on those providing care to rural, minority, and other underserved populations. NLM firmly believes that improved access by minority and other health professionals to health information in MEDLINE and the Library's other computerized databases, will result in higher quality health care for the Nation's citizens.

a) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: HBCUs and Surrounding Communities (ongoing/expanded) (recommended for highlight in the Executive Summary)

Work through Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to provide access to information about toxicology, environmental health, and hazardous wastes. The NLM's Toxicology and Environmental Health Information Outreach to Minority Communities project was highlighted as one of the model training initiatives in the HHS Strategic Elements for Environmental Justice. To further extend the impact of this effort and to address the concerns about health disparities that may be associated with race, socioeconomic status, environmental factors, etc., this effort will be expanded from the HBCUs to include more broadly members of minority and low socioeconomic communities.

- b) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: Toxicology and Environmental Health (*ongoing/expanded*)

Improve coverage and retrieval mechanisms for those working in public health, including expanded access to environmental and toxicological data relevant to minority populations that are disproportionately exposed to environmental health hazards.

- c) Potential New/Expanded Initiative: Support Public Health Professionals Serving Minority Populations (*ongoing/expanded*)

Continue special efforts to increase awareness and use of NLM services among public health professionals who serve minority communities.

4. Other

D. Other

Planning Process and Public Input

This Strategic Plan to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities is based closely on the recent NLM Long Range Plan 2000-2005 and follows its overall structure and content. In order to develop the Long Range Plan, a document called The NLM Track Record was prepared as a synthesis and summary of past planning efforts and a statement of where we are today. The Track Record was sent out to over 250 past planning panel members and other advisors for comment as well as being posted on the public NLM web site. The comments received from well over 100 individuals were reviewed by the NLM Board of Regents, who asked staff to incorporate a number of priorities into a new draft Plan for the next five years. A broadly representative group of NLM advisors met on December 1, 1999, to review that draft. Planning advisors who provided extensive input on reduction of health disparities have included representatives from:

- HBCUs
- the Hispanic community
- the Native American community
- consumer health organizations
- public libraries
- other community organizations